



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Marcos II 2023 Budget: Feed the rich, starve the poor

What better way to highlight a government's (mis)priorities than its national budget? The proposed PhP5.3 trillion 2023 national budget of the Marcos II regime provides massive payouts for the Office of the President, Office of the Vice President Sara Duterte, national defense, foreign and national debt servicing, discretionary funds and gratuitous infrastructure. On the other hand, it extracts from the already pauperized coffers of essential social services such as health, education, social welfare, labor and the agricultural sector.

In his proposed budget, Marcos, Jr. wants to appropriate PhP8.969 billion for the Office of the President, a 10% increase from 2022, while the Office of the Vice President gets a hefty PhP2.292 billion, a whopping 223% increase from 2022! A part of both these allocations, PhP4.5 billion for Marcos II and PhP620 million for Sara Duterte, are discretionary 'confidential and intelligence funds', never subject to government audit and traditional source of massive corruption.

Top priority goes to the Department of Public Works and Highways with PhP718.4 billion (12.6% of the proposed budget), automatic debt service allocation at PhP611 billion (11.6%), Department of National Defense including the Armed Forces of the Philippines with PhP240.6 billion (4.6%) and the Department of Interior and Local Government including the Philippine National Police with PhP91.8 billion (3.6%).

Meanwhile, allocation for the Department of Health is drastically reduced, including its program funds for Public Health, Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases and for COVID-19 mitigation. No funds for the procurement of COVID-19 booster shots!

Budgets for the Department of Education and Department of Labor and Employment had similar cuts. A whopping PhP2.5 billion is slashed from the University of the Philippines allocation. The 'study now, pay later' program is defunded, and the social protection budget is reduced, amidst claims of 'economic recovery'.

Dissenters beware, though. Marcos Jr. is carrying on with the notorious National Task Force on Ending Local Communist Armed Conflict and its sustained campaigns of vilification, trumped-up charges and extrajudicial killings of dissenters, as well as bombings, militarization and extrajudicial killings in rural communities. These nefarious crimes are well funded, not only from the defense, police and 'confidential and intelligence' funds, but also from the discretionary funds of other agencies under the thumb of the anti-communist task force.

This squander of public funds aggravate further the burden of the Filipino masses. The local ruling elite and their foreign patrons will benefit from this extravagance, while the vast majority of the already impoverished Filipinos will receive the scraps from their table. More than anything else, Marcos Jr's 2023 budget highlights the bankruptcy of the Philippine ruling system and the urgency for the advance of the revolutionary movement for social and national liberation. **UP**



Sen. Legarda urges Marcos II government to resume peace talks

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda urged the government of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. to resume the stalled peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. In a speech delivered during the Philippine Senate's plenary session on 30 August, she said, "I am in favor of peace talks that are built

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upon a genuine desire to come to an agreement, which are within our democratic framework and in accordance with all our laws.”

She added, “I believe the best way to achieve this is by building mutual understanding through good faith discussions, through which we can find that we have more that unites us than what sets us apart.”

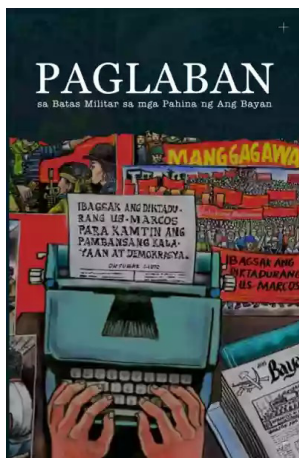
Sen. Legarda also argued that there is nothing wrong and illegal about being a leftist. “Believing in policies and philosophies that may be left of center, so to speak, does not make one subversive,” Legarda pointed out, as she recalled her experience working with leftist groups and added “there is nothing wrong with that.” Sen. Legarda was responding to a proposal from Sen. Francis Tolentino requiring public officials to disclose ties to groups tagged by security officials as ‘terrorists’.

Peace advocates welcomed Sen. Legarda’s call to resume the GRP-NDFP peace talks. Bishop Reuel Marigza, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, said that Sen. Legarda’s statement “is a breath of fresh air amid the toxic atmosphere brought about by speeches and public discourses that sow hate and war.”

The Movement Against Tyranny also backed Legarda’s pronouncements saying, “Sen. Legarda’s call for peace should be supported, not red-tagged and vilified... Sen. Legarda walks her talk. Her manifestation was not only incisive and spot on. It is exactly what the country needs to hear and do,” said the group.

In a statement made earlier, NDFP Peace Panel interim Chairperson Julie de Lima stressed that if the Marcos Jr. regime wants peace negotiations to resume, it has to do away with the obstacles to peace put up by Duterte. “All the issuances of Duterte for preventing peace negotiations continue to be enforced by the Marcos II regime. So far, Marcos II wants to continue Duterte’s all-out war policy and the revolutionary movement has no choice but to fight the counterrevolution,” de Lima said. **UP**

[Photo: lorenlegarda.com.ph]



CPP publishes anthology of articles on Martial Law

The Communist Party of the Philippines’ official publication Ang Bayan released on 1 September a 400-page anthology of its key editorials and news articles, “Resistance to Martial Law in the pages of Ang Bayan”, to mark the 50th anniversary of the declaration of Martial Law by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. on 21 September 1972.

When martial law was declared, the CPP said, all forms of expression was prohibited, protest demonstrations were banned, the press was padlocked and oppositionists and activists were jailed. Many were killed outright.

The CPP, re-established in 1968, was the only political party that survived the political repression and fought the martial law regime. “Ang Bayan played an important role in reporting what was happening and organizing people’s resistance,” the CPP said.

CPP Founding Chairman Prof. Jose Maria Sison, who also served as Ang Bayan Editor-in-Chief from 1969 to 1976, wrote the Foreword for the anthology. He said the book is timely and highly significant in the face of the “usurpation of political power by Marcos, Jr. and Sara Duterte” based on the lie that the dictator Marcos, Sr. ushered in the country’s ‘golden age’ in his 20-year reign of terror and greed.

This so-called golden age, Prof. Sison said, “eventually caused his overthrow by popular mass uprisings in 1986.”

The anthology is available on its [website](#) and for download in PDF from the [Philippine Revolution Web Central](#).

Numerous activities will take place in September in the Philippines and abroad, to commemorate the Martial Law period and its relevance to the situation today. The International Office of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines will launch an exposition of visual, literary and audiovisual works starting on 18 September in the Netherlands. Testimonies of Martial Law victims will also be heard during the exposition.

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The CPP declared, “During this month, the Party pays tribute to all the heroes and martyrs of the democratic mass struggles against the US-Marcos dictatorship including the leaders and cadres of the Party who firmly carried the torch of resistance to serve as a beacon especially during the darkest hours under the tyrannical and terrorist Marcos I regime. They are among those who bore the brunt of the dictatorship’s brutality and became targets of the most cruel forms of state terrorism.” **UP**



File photo: cpp.ph

NPA checkpoint, armed offensives strike Marcos troopers

The New People’s Army launched a series of armed offensives in various parts of the country against the mercenary troops of the Marcos II regime in the second half of August. These resulted in the death of at least seven elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and

Philippine National Police, and the wounding of several others. The successful NPA offensives belie claims by the Manila government of these regions as ‘insurgency-free’.

The NPA-Surigao del Sur in Mindanao Island set up an armed checkpoint on 30 August in the village of Libas Gua, San Miguel town in Surigao del Sur province, to thwart the PNP of Tago town in its planned ‘Simultaneous Anti-Criminality Law Enforcement Operations’ against the civilian population. PNP intelligence officers aboard an unmarked car approached the NPA checkpoint. Instead of stopping however, they opened fire at the Red fighters who in turn fired back. The vehicle was damaged, but the PNP elements were able to escape on foot.

Earlier that day, a soldier of the AFP 75th Infantry Battalion approached the NPA checkpoint on a motorcycle. The AFP soldier panicked and fell from his vehicle. He was able to run away, however, grabbing a child hostage along the way.

Sandara Sidlakan, NPA-Surigao del Sur spokesperson, said the PNP’s so-called SACLEO is a scam to perpetrate illegal searches, illegal arrests, extortion, harassment and extrajudicial killings against the civilian population. PNP agents routinely ‘discover’ weapons, bullets and explosives in searches of village homes. Sidlakan said these SACLEOs sow terror among the civilian population and must be stopped.

Meanwhile, in Pio Duran town, Albay province, the NPA Santos Binamera Command of Albay ambushed the combined troops of the AFP 31st and 49th Infantry Battalion in the afternoon of 31 August. At least two AFP troopers died and an undetermined number wounded while there were no casualties among the NPA Red fighters.

According to the NPA-Albay, the AFP units were rampaging and sowing terror among the rural communities of Pio Duran and Donsol town, Sorsogon province in the previous three weeks before they were ambushed.

More recently, on 1 September, two elements of the PNP Special Action Force were confirmed dead while an undetermined number were wounded in an armed encounter with Red fighters of the NPA-Nueva Ecija in the boundary towns of Gabaldon and Gen. Tinio in Nueva Ecija province. The NPA suffered no casualty. The PNP-SAF unit was part of a combined operation with the AFP 91st and 84th Infantry Battalion.

On 30 August, Red fighters of the NPA Central Negros Front besieged the encampment of the AFP 62nd Infantry Battalion in Trinidad village, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental province. JB Regalado, NPA Central Negros Front spokesperson, said the armed offensive resulted in the death of two soldiers and wounding of another. **UP**



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